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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Second periodic reports submitted by States parties
under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant

Addendum

ALGERIA*

[22 May 2000]

* The initial report concerning rights covered by articles 1 to 15 of the Covenant (E/1990/5/Add.22) submitted by the Government of Algeria was considered by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at its thirteenth session (see E/C.12/1995/SR.46-48).

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Introduction

1. Algeria ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on 12 December 1989. When its initial report (E/1990/5/Add.22) was considered, the Algerian delegation gave an account of the programme of political and economic reforms launched after the adoption of the new Constitution of 23 February 1989 for the setting up of new institutions based on political pluralism, the separation of powers, the independence of the judiciary, freedom of expression and the decision to open the country to a market economy. It also stated that, at the international level, the Algerian authorities had sought to speed up the process of accession to the various international human rights instruments.

2. Since the submission of the initial report, the Algerian authorities have continued in their efforts to consolidate the rule of law, multi-party democracy and the promotion and protection of human rights, despite the constraints posed by terrorist criminality. New institutions were established following the constitutional revision of 28 November 1996, the human rights machinery already in place was strengthened and certain aspects of economic, social and cultural legislation were brought into line with the new situation. Community associations were given increasing encouragement and have developed considerably.

3. In accordance with the Committee's Guidelines, this periodic report is divided into two parts. Part One, entitled "General information", describes the country's general political structure and the framework within which human rights are protected. Part Two contains information on the substantive provisions of the Covenant with regard to which changes have been made since the initial report was drafted.

Part one

General information

4. Since gaining independence in 1962, Algeria has endeavoured to establish a State which is based on grass-roots participation and respects human rights and fundamental freedoms. All of Algeria's constitutions since independence have embodied universal human rights principles. Its opening to a multi-party system in 1989, however, led Algeria to speed up the process of accession to international human rights instruments. It is now submitting the reports due as a result of these international undertakings.

I. GENERAL POLITICAL STRUCTURE

5. Algeria faced a series of challenges on independence: return of refugees, social and psychological care for the beneficiaries of the victims of the war of national liberation, national reconstruction in all its aspects and setting-up of government structures. The institutions needed to enable a young nation to meet such challenges had to be designed and established and their effectiveness in the political and economic context of the time ensured. This reconstruction effort brought about compulsory schooling for all, free health care and a policy of full employment.

6. From 1988 onwards, there was a growing determination in Algeria to consolidate the rule of law and introduce a transition on two levels (political democratization and economic liberalization). As was the case elsewhere, this transition did not take place without difficulty. The building of a modern democratically functioning State with a transparent administration was hampered by domestic obstacles linked to a single-party culture and economic and social constraints.

7. The political reforms undertaken by the authorities since then, following a lengthy process of dialogue with all political parties which respect the Constitution and laws of the Republic, have resulted in institutions established on the basis of universal suffrage. The adoption by referendum of a revised Constitution on 28 November 1996 further strengthened freedoms, political pluralism, the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary.

8. In addition to the Constitution, the democratization of public activity in Algeria today is based on three laws:

(a) The Political Parties Act, which was adopted in 1989 and amended in 1997, enabled more than 60 political groupings to emerge on the political scene. A subsequent adjustment brought the number of parties down to its current figure of 28;

(b) The Associations Act, promulgated in 1988 and amended in 1990, stipulates that associations may be established by a simple declaration of the founders, either at the wilaya (prefecture) or at the Ministry of the Interior (if it is a national association). There are nearly 50,000 associations active in Algeria today; some, such as associations for the protection and promotion of women's rights, claim recognition as associations of public interest;

(c) The Information Act, which was adopted in 1990, paved the way for an independent or partisan press in addition to the press in the public service.

9. The first multi-party elections for the office of President of the Republic were held on 16 November 1995. They were followed by presidential elections on 15 April 1999, in advance of their scheduled date. The President's mandate is renewable only once. He holds the country's highest office, subject to the limits set by the Constitution, and appoints the head of Government, who then defines his programme and submits it for approval by the National People's Assembly.

10. Legislative power is exercised by Parliament, which consists of two houses: the National People's Assembly and the Council of the Nation. It monitors action by the Government and enacts laws. The National People's Assembly is composed of 380 deputies. Following the legislative elections of 5 June 1997, it is composed of 10 political parties and 11 independents. The Council of the Nation, established in December 1997, has 144 seats. Two thirds of its members are elected by a board composed of members of the communal and departmental people's assemblies and the remaining third, or 48 members, are appointed by the President of the Republic.

11. The independence of the judiciary is provided for in article 138 of the Constitution.

II. GENERAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS ARE PROTECTED

A. Human rights machinery

12. Most of the early warning and monitoring machinery in the area of human rights is now in place. It covers both individual (civil and political) and collective (economic, social and cultural) rights. It is divided into four main categories of interrelated mechanisms.

1. Political machinery

13. This consists of Parliament, which, with its two houses - the National People's Assembly and the Council of the Nation - is a fitting forum for expression of the citizens' concerns. Human rights questions are at the forefront of parliamentary discussions and are dealt with by permanent commissions established to that end by both houses.

14. Political parties are considered by law to be a constituent element of the machinery for the promotion of human rights. The Act of 8 July 1989 on Political Parties, amended in March 1997, requires party statutes and programmes to include the safeguarding of individual rights and fundamental freedoms among their objectives. Article 3 of the Act stipulates: "In all their activities, political parties are required to abide by the following principles and objectives:

Respect for individual and collective freedoms and for human rights;

Commitment to democracy and respect for national values;

Observance of a multi-party system;

Respect for the democratic and republican nature of the State."

2. Judicial machinery

15. The Algerian State has set up judicial machinery to guarantee citizens' rights and provide the system of justice with decision-making autonomy. To that end, the judiciary in Algeria is composed as follows: (a) the daira (sub-prefecture level) courts, the wilaya (departmental level) courts and the Supreme Court at the national level.

16. Article 152 of the Constitution also provides for a Council of State, to serve as the body regulating the activity of the administrative courts. It was established on 17 June 1998 and is composed of 44 members.

17. Lastly, Parliament has adopted a law establishing a court responsible for settling conflicts of jurisdiction between the Supreme Court and the Council of State, in accordance with article 152 of the Constitution.

3. Freedom of the press

18. The law considers the rights to information and to freedom of the press to be essential machinery for the monitoring and protection of individual rights. In this regard, the considerable development of the press in Algeria has been a catalyst for the protection of human rights at the collective level. There are currently 25 daily newspapers in existence, 8 belonging to the State sector and 17 to the private or partisan sector. Their circulation averages a total of 1 million copies per day. There are 43 weekly newspapers in existence, for an average circulation of 1.4 million copies per week. Twenty other bimonthly or monthly periodicals have a global circulation of 300,000 copies per month. The reading public is estimated at 9 million people per week.

19. Contrary to certain media reports, no Algerian journalist has been convicted of a crime of opinion. The only such cases reported involved trials for defamation or dissemination of false information. Cases of certain national newspapers not being published have generally been due to commercial disputes with their printers or to bankruptcy, as is the case in other countries.

20. As the international organizations themselves have acknowledged, the Algerian press is one of the freest in the third world. The International Federation of Journalists, whose executive board includes Algeria, is accredited in Algeria; its North Africa office is located in Algiers.

21. Since the completion of the institutional process which endowed Algeria with all the legal instruments needed for the democratic functioning of a State subject to the rule of law, no legal proceedings have been taken against any newspaper, despite the fact that situations involving "repeated defamation and insults" involving certain newspapers fully justified recourse to the system of justice to obtain redress. It should be noted in this context that the restrictions imposed at one time on the processing of security information have been lifted.

22. Foreign journalists regularly receive accreditation in Algeria. Accreditation is granted under a specific mechanism in order to process applications more flexibly and rapidly. A sign of Algeria's accessibility to foreign journalists is the fact that 1,200 foreign journalists visited the country in 1997 and 626 in 1998. The negative and tendentious articles by some of these journalists did not prevent their authors from making repeated visits to the country.

4. Machinery involving associations and trade unions

23. Associations have grown considerably since 1988. At the national level, there are currently nearly 50,000 associations active in various fields. The Algerian Constitution gives prominence to freedom of association for the defence of human rights. Article 32 guarantees the individual and collective defence of these rights and article 41 defines the area of application: freedom of expression, association and assembly. Freedom of association naturally includes the political field, but has also found expression in the protection of certain categories of rights, the rights of women, children, the sick, the disabled, consumers and users of public services. The authorities encourage associations by granting them various subsidies and facilities.

24. Associations now have constitutions, a basis and an activity that enables them to take their place on the international scene. Associations that are involved in the promotion of the rights of women, education and action to combat illiteracy are especially active.

25. Trade union freedom has been reaffirmed in the Constitution and has been given organizational expression in the Act of 21 December 1991. More detailed information is found in Part Two (art. 8).

5. Other machinery for the protection and promotion of human rights

26. As a result of its opening to political pluralism and its accession to the international human rights instruments, Algeria decided, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions and following the example of other countries, to set up a National Human Rights Observatory (created by Presidential Decree No. 92-72 of 22 February 1992). As a non-governmental public body composed in equal numbers of elected and appointed members, under the aegis of the President of the Republic, with administrative and financial autonomy and independent of ministerial control, the National Human Rights Observatory is responsible for the promotion of all human rights and the monitoring of respect for them. Although it is restricted to an advisory role, it has a broad mandate, which includes the following:

(a) Promoting human rights in accordance with the principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

(b) Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the provisions on human rights contained in the international agreements ratified by Algeria and the provisions of the Algerian Constitution, Acts and Regulations;

(c) Taking action whenever infringements of human rights are reported or brought to its notice;

(d) Producing an annual report on the state of human rights in the country and submitting it to the President of the Republic.

27. The National Human Rights Observatory carries out awareness-raising and outreach activities relating to the human rights principles embodied in national legislation and international legal instruments. In that respect, it publishes a quarterly review of human rights, a press review and an internal information bulletin on its activities. In practice, however, the Observatory, whose mission was originally to serve as a "government adviser" on human rights problems, is increasingly acting as a mediator between the authorities and private individuals in order to prevent disputes from leading systematically to legal action.

B. International treaties and the internal legal system

28. Algeria's international commitments take precedence over internal law. In a decision dated 20 August 1989, the Constitutional Council reaffirmed the constitutional principle that duly ratified international treaties take precedence over internal law. That decision states that "... after its ratification and following its publication, any agreement forms part of internal law

and, pursuant to article 132 of the Constitution, acquires a higher status than the law, thereby permitting any Algerian citizen to avail himself of its provisions in the courts". Consequently, private citizens may avail themselves of the protective machinery set up by the Human Rights Committee and the Committee against Torture once domestic remedies have been exhausted.

29. The Algerian authorities, the National Human Rights Observatory, associations and the media attach great importance to remedies under international mechanisms. In practice, Algerian citizens and their lawyers seem satisfied with the many existing domestic remedies (courts, NHRO).

III. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY

30. Algeria's ratification of international human rights instruments was extensively publicized throughout the national media when they were submitted for consideration and adoption by the National Assembly. All instruments were published in the official gazette.

31. In addition to the symposia and seminars regularly organized on this topic, the annual celebration of Human Rights Day on 10 December is an occasion for publicizing the different international human rights instruments to which Algeria is a party. Similarly, 8 March and 1 June offer a regular opportunity to reaffirm the importance and role of women and children in society.

32. At the university level, a module entitled "Public freedoms", which was taught in the law faculties, has been reintroduced with an updated syllabus which takes international developments and recent accessions into account. Certain universities (such as Oran, Tizi Ouzou and Annaba) have already created specific modules. Human rights are taught to students at the National Judicial Training Institute, the Police Training School and the National Prison Administration Training School.

33. A UNESCO Chair in the teaching of human rights has been established at the University of Oran. This educational structure was inaugurated in December 1995 and is responsible for organizing and promoting an integrated system of human rights research, teaching and documentation. Preparations are under way to establish a master's degree specifically in the field of human rights. One-day workshops on human rights and humanitarian law are organized regularly and their work has been published. For its part, the National Human Rights Observatory publicizes the human rights principles embodied in national legislation and the international instruments to which Algeria is a party. Its outreach work takes the form of the publication of journals and the organization and sponsoring of seminars, exhibitions and one-day workshops in cooperation with community associations.

34. Since the beginning of the decade, Algeria has been in a period of transition at two levels: to a pluralistic democracy and to a market economy. There were some complications in the course of this difficult transition, owing primarily to the state of the Algerian economy and the unfavourable international economic situation. These economic problems provided fertile ground for political dissent, which some forces attempted to use in order to oppose the process of change within the country through means that included resorting to terrorist acts. In order to deal with this new situation, the Algerian authorities decided to declare a state of emergency in

February 1992. Although the state of emergency did impose some restrictions on the exercise of public rights and freedoms, it did not relieve the State of its obligations to guarantee the right to exercise the fundamental civil rights provided for in the existing internal constitutional system and in the international agreements ratified by Algeria. Similarly, action to preserve public order and protect individuals and property threatened by terrorism has always been carried out in accordance with the law and on the basis of respect for the undertakings deriving from various international instruments. The purpose of such action is to strengthen the rule of law and create conditions for the legitimization of institutions through a return to the genuinely free, multi-party and democratic universal suffrage which existed in Algeria in 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1999.

Part Two

Information on specific articles of the Covenant

Article 1

Right of peoples to self-determination

35. Algeria has established the principle of solidarity with "all peoples fighting for political and economic liberation, for the right of self-determination and against all racial discrimination" as a constitutional principle (art. 27). This aspect is linked, historically, with the struggle of the Algerian people to regain its independence and with its unwavering support for peoples struggling for independence. Moreover, Algerian diplomacy has always worked "to reinforce international cooperation and to develop friendly relations between States on the basis of equality, mutual interest and non-interference in internal affairs" (art. 28). It is expressly stated in the Constitution that the leaders of the country shall "refrain from resorting to war to violate the legitimate sovereignty or liberty of other peoples" (art. 26).

36. The effect of these elements of the Constitution of 28 November 1996 is to make the principle of solidarity referred to in article 27 applicable solely to the "colonial peoples and territories" covered by General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960. In that context, Algeria has continued to support peoples struggling for their national liberation, especially the peoples of Palestine and Western Sahara. At the same time, the Algerian Government has pursued its active and affirmative policy of supporting measures aimed at combating, at the international level, all forms of political, racial and religious discrimination.

Article 2

Obligations of States parties

37. The principle of non-discrimination among citizens has been scrupulously respected by legislation since the independence of Algeria. This rule is made easier because practices involving racial discrimination are traditionally unknown in Algerian society.

38. Articles 27 and 42 of the Constitution prohibit all discrimination based on race, language or religion. The Civil Code, the Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Electoral Code and the various special codes (commerce, information, health, customs, etc.) are based on the

principle of the equality of citizens. None of their provisions has been considered by the Constitutional Council to be contrary to the spirit or the letter of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It may be recalled that one of the particular duties of the Constitutional Council is to monitor the conformity of legislation with the Constitution and the international agreements signed by Algeria, to censure any violation of the principle of the equality of citizens and to verify that legislation and regulations applied to foreign nationals are compatible with the Constitution and the international agreements ratified by Algeria.

39. It should also be noted that Algeria's accession to international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and its cooperation with treaty and non-treaty-based bodies have promoted greater awareness of human rights.

Article 3

Equal rights of men and women

40. Since independence, Algeria has repealed discriminatory legislation and regulations. The principle that all citizens are equal in terms of rights and duties and have equal access to legal protection is embodied in article 29 of the Constitution. Algerian legislation, which incorporates in large measure the provisions of international agreements, is based on this principle of non-discrimination.

41. The principle of the equality of the two sexes is established by articles 29, 31, 33, 34, 36 and 51 of the Constitution. It may be noted in this connection that women, as well as men:

(i) Have access to all categories of public office;

(ii) Are entitled to vote and thus to approve candidates for electoral office;

(iii) May run for office in all elections, including presidential elections;

(iv) May establish a party, an association or a trade union and may lead and represent such bodies;

(v) May express their opinions freely through all channels;

(vi) May hold meetings and other events;

(vii) Have access to the courts and all other tribunals;

(viii) Choose their residence and move freely within the country and abroad;

(ix) Enjoy all social benefits provided by law;

(x) Have access to primary, intermediate, secondary and higher education;

(xi) Have access to vocational training courses in all branches, including those deemed to be a male preserve;

(xii) Have access to both preventive and curative health care;

(xiii) Conclude all kinds of contracts;

(xiv) May obtain loans or other similar types of advances provided for by law; the legislation governing the granting of bank loans and mortgages does not discriminate in any way;

(xv) Have access to employment and enjoy career and promotion guarantees;

(xvi) Enjoy the same remuneration, statutory rest period and pension entitlements.

42. Non-discrimination may be illustrated by focusing on three key sectors: education, justice and health services:

(a) Education: Females currently account for between 45 and 48 per cent of those enrolled in primary, intermediate, secondary and university education. Some 43 per cent of teachers in primary schools are women (82 per cent in the country's five largest cities, Algiers, Oran, Constantine, Annaba and Sétif), 45 per cent in intermediate education (71 per cent in the five largest cities) and 33 per cent in secondary education (61 per cent in the five largest cities). In the long run, the statutory change, whatever its pace, will unquestionably follow this trend;

(b) Justice: Of the total of 2,510 judges, 667, or 26.57 per cent, are women. Sixteen of the 34 member judges of the State Council established in June 1998 are women. The 200 candidates admitted to competitive examinations for the judiciary in recent years have included, on average, 110 women. This trend reflects the principle of non-discrimination between men and women.

(c) Health services: Statistics for the medical and pharmaceutical sectors indicate that the proportion of women in the health professions is increasing. In 1996, the ratio of women was estimated at 51 per cent; in the case of doctors, it stands at 36 per cent for university hospital doctors, 46.7 per cent for specialists and 48.6 per cent for general practitioners. The ratio increases to 64.4 per cent for dental surgeons and to 65.4 per cent for pharmacists.

43. Married women in employment enjoy the status of socially insured persons by virtue of their contributions. Their marital status has no influence on their social security entitlements. Moreover, there is no statutory provision that would constitute an impediment to gainful activity for a married woman. Article 17 of the Labour Relations Act of 21 February 1990 prohibits all forms of discrimination related to a woman's marital status. Indeed, certain facilities are provided to married women such as the option of taking leave of absence to raise a child under the age of five or to look after a disabled child.

44. With regard to recruitment, it should be noted that the law guarantees equal access to employment without distinction on grounds of sex. For example, civil service

recruitment figures for 1996 and 1997 show a marked predominance of women, who account for 65 and 58 per cent, respectively, of the total. It should further be noted that women do not require their husband's permission to take up gainful employment. Women and men are required to produce the same documents for the relevant administrative file.

45. The law guarantees equal pay and this provision is rigorously applied in practice, in both the public and private sectors. Compliance is verified by the Labour Inspectorate.

Articles 4 and 5

Restrictions on the rights recognized by the Covenant

46. The measures taken under the state of emergency in no way affect the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Algerian citizens have continued to exercise in full the rights recognized in the Covenant despite the havoc wrought and the crimes committed by terrorist criminals. In every respect, terrorism has been one of the main factors impeding the implementation of the Covenant. Terrorist criminals, spreading fear in the population, have not only committed vile and unspeakable acts of murder against ordinary people, but have also destroyed economic, cultural and administrative infrastructure and hospitals.

47. This unspeakably barbarous behaviour has caused considerable damage, severely hampering the implementation of the Covenant. Terrorist acts have indiscriminately targeted all components of public property in a systematic strategy of destruction of the foundations of the Algerian State and its infrastructure (economic units, schools, town councils, health centres, post offices). The public authorities very swiftly developed a practical and legal response to ensure the full protection of property.

48. The education and training sector recorded 914 acts of destruction or sabotage against primary schools, especially in rural areas, lower-level and higher-level secondary schools and vocational training centres. However, all these facilities were repaired relatively quickly, at a cost of 3 billion Algerian dinars, so that the pupils and students could return.

49. In the productive sector of the economy, 706 acts of sabotage, particularly arson, were recorded. Local public corporations were the prime targets and the worst affected. In response, the State took measures to protect energy sources and water pumping stations and to ensure the systematic replacement of destroyed electric pylons, transformers and equipment at a cost of 2.3 billion dinars.

50. Strategic basic infrastructure was also targeted by acts of sabotage: 223 acts of destruction of diverse engineering structures such as bridges, interchanges, etc. were recorded. Rail transport was one of the worst hit subsectors (110 acts of sabotage), causing inconvenience to users, holding up supplies to the population and entailing substantial economic losses. Despite all these setbacks, the rail transport sector continued to operate uninterruptedly throughout the country at a cost of 1.5 billion dinars.

51. Another sector that provides services to the public was specially targeted: a total of 690 terrorist acts were directed against administrative infrastructure, especially district council buildings, administrative centres and tax offices. The cost of repairs to these facilities amounted to 6.3 billion dinars. The health sector was not spared; a budget appropriation of 500 million dinars was voted for repairs to and rehabilitation of infrastructure (health care centres, polyclinics, rural maternity hospitals, etc.) affected by 395 acts of sabotage.

52. The telecommunication sector was hit by some 851 acts of sabotage or destruction entailing repair costs estimated at 900 million dinars.

53. As at 30 April 1998, 6,032 terrorist acts of sabotage or destruction of infrastructure had been recorded throughout the national territory, entailing budget expenditures of over 22 billion dinars on repairs.

Assessment of public property destroyed by terrorist acts and action taken to repair the damage

Type of property	Number of units repaired	Cost of repairs
Administrative sector	690	6 317 236
Cultural sector	126	224 570
Religious sector	139	11 221
Education sector	914	3 192 573
Health sector	395	435 434
Telecommunication sector	1 563	880 210
Energy sector (electricity)	1 563	2 292 331
Water sector	273	382 010
Financial sector (banks and insurance companies)	42	147 228
Transport sector (railways)	110	1 591 777
Economic sector (economic enterprises)	706	30 807 401
Basic infrastructure (engineering structures)	223	3 358 253

Article 6

Right to work

1. General data

54. All Algeria's Constitutions since independence have recognized the right to work. Article 55 of the Constitution of 28 November 1996 stipulates under this heading that "[a]ll citizens have the right to work. The right to protection, safety and healthy conditions at work is guaranteed by law".

55. The right to equality is also guaranteed by the legislation on access to employment, remuneration and promotion, as will be shown below with the help of statistics. These measures have led to considerable progress in various areas of activity. In the civil service, legislation and regulations such as the model staff regulations for the civil service (Decree No. 85-59 of 23 March 1985) contain no discriminatory provisions whatsoever.

56. Labour Relations Act No. 90-11 establishes basic workers' rights (collective bargaining, social security, pension, hygiene, occupational safety and health, rest periods, right to strike, etc.). It also confirms the right to protection against discrimination in employment, except on grounds of aptitude and merit (art. 6). Article 17 stipulates that: "Any provision contained in a convention, a collective agreement or a contract of employment that is conducive to any form of discrimination in employment based on age, sex, social or marital status, family background, political convictions or membership or otherwise of a trade union shall be null and void". Such discrimination is punishable by the penalties laid down in articles 142 and 143 of the same Act.

2. Structural adjustment and employment

57. It should be noted that the vigorous full employment and investment policy launched in the 1970s slackened off in the early 1980s and lost speed owing to the decline in oil earnings and constraints due to repayment of the foreign debt.

58. Stagnating investment led inexorably to a reduction in the supply of permanent jobs in all sectors except agriculture. In the early 1990s, macroeconomic constraints, the requirements of in-depth restructuring of the economic and commodity sector based on State capital, efforts to enhance the performance of production tools and the transition to a market economy confirmed the trend towards economic recession reflected in a decline in job creation. Even sectors that were traditional generators of employment reached their limits. For the first time, the informal employment sector and the spread of unemployment affected university graduates.

59. During this decade, as from 1994, Algeria rescheduled its debt, particularly in response to worsening macroeconomic and financial imbalances. It launched a macroeconomic stabilization programme backed first by a confirmation agreement and then by an extended financing facility agreement.

60. As a result of these programmes, the rate of growth of GDP recovered from 1 per cent in 1993 and 2 per cent in 1994 to an average of 3.4 per cent between 1994 and 1998. Inflation declined considerably, from an annual average rate of 29 per cent in 1994 to 18.7 per cent in 1996 and 5 per cent in 1998. Furthermore, the budget deficit was reversed, as the balance moved, from -4.4 per cent in 1994 to +2.4 per cent in 1997.

61. But these goals were achieved at the expense of household purchasing power and had an impact on employment. The unemployment rate has been estimated at 29.2 per cent of the economically active population, which is equivalent to 2.3 million people. This deterioration is due to the marked decline in job creation as well as to the redundancies brought about by economic reform, which led to 360,000 layoffs between 1994 and 1998, equivalent to over 8 per cent of the gainfully employed population.

Trends in employment from 1993 to 1997

(thousands and percentage)

	1994		1997	
	Number	%	Number	%
Economically active population	6 814		8 069	
Gainfully employed population	5 154	100	5 710	100
Of whom:				
Structured employment	4 325	84.0	4 743	83.1
Agriculture	1 023	19.8	1 200	21.0
Industry	528	10.3	500	8.8
Buildings and public works	667	13.0	700	12.3
Services and communications				
Administration	1 211	23.5	1 327	23.2
Home work	829	16.0	967	16.9
Unemployed persons	1 660		2 359	
Unemployment rate		24.4		29.2

3. Specific action against unemployment

62. To meet the difficulties created by the structural adjustment programme, the Government adopted a number of measures aimed at cushioning the adverse impact of reform on employment. The measures focused on the establishment of the following schemes or agencies.

63. The introduction of unemployment insurance for employees at risk of losing their jobs involuntarily and for economic reasons (Act No. 98-07 of 2 August 1998 amending and supplementing Legislative Decree No. 94-11 of 26 May 1994). This measure, implemented in 1994, is financed by unemployment-insurance contributions levied on employees and employers at rates of 1.5 and 2.5 per cent, respectively, of net remuneration. The downsizing company pays an eligibility contribution (COD) to the National Employment Insurance Fund (CNAC) equivalent to 80 per cent of annual remuneration for each employee laid off. Laid-off workers who are not eligible for normal or early retirement are entitled to temporary coverage by CNAC under the unemployment insurance policy for 12 to 36 months and receive a monthly unemployment benefit amounting to between three quarters and three times the guaranteed minimum wage (SMIG). In addition, CNAC organizes recycling courses to enhance employability and encourages the establishment of micro-enterprises. A "bad weather" unemployment benefit for employees in the buildings and public works and water sectors was introduced further to an amendment of Order No. 97-01 of 11 January 1997 (Official Gazette No. 03-1997).

64. Repurchase by employees of the capital of a dissolved company: this measure was facilitated by an amendment to the Privatization Act of August 1995. Based on a recovery plan, specifications and bank loans, this initiative enabled 31,419 employees to become shareholders in their own companies by the end of 1998. As a result, company employees assumed ownership of more than 1,000 units.

65. The employment programme known as Local Initiative Employees (ESIL): this programme enables unemployed young people to gain job experience in a production unit or public service body for periods ranging from 3 to 12 months. Subsidies to local authorities are intended to cover salary costs, but they are granted on condition that some of the young people are offered permanent employment.

66. The programme for the vocational integration of young graduates through pre-employment contracts (CPEs) (Circular No. 008 of 29 June 1998). This programme, launched in July 1998, is designed to benefit young university graduates and high-level technologists aged between 19 and 35. It is also open to unemployed persons who have participated in a standby programme such as ESIL or in general interest activities (AIGs). They are hired under a one-year renewable contract financed by the Algerian Social Development Agency (ADS) from Treasury funds. Beneficiaries of the CPE programme are awarded an employment certificate that may be presented in support of any future job application. Remuneration is equivalent to the national guaranteed minimum wage (SNMG).

67. The establishment of a National Youth Employment Support Agency in September 1996, which became operational in the second quarter of 1997. It is responsible for supporting and encouraging investment and micro-enterprise projects submitted by young people with a down payment of between 5 and 20 per cent in connection with the implementation of their investment projects. It is also intended for employees who have been laid off. The beneficiaries are young people aged under 35, unemployed persons who have completed their national service and holders of seed capital. A total of 3,570 micro-enterprises are already operational. It should be noted that 22,700 files had been submitted to the Agency by the end of March 1998, including over 16,000 eligible for the benefits granted by the State. As of that date, 3,160 files for publicly funded projects had been finalized and 3,980 for self-financed or associated financing projects. In addition, an Executive Decree of 9 June 1998 (No. 98-200 – Official Gazette No. 42-1998) established a young developers risk/lending mutual guarantee fund.

68. According to recent statistics, 441,834 jobs were created in 1998 (compared with 394,274 in 1997). Of this total, 209,518 jobs are permanent (compared with 175,655 in 1997), to which may be added 232,316 jobs that are classified as "equivalent to permanent posts" (compared with 218,619 in 1997).

69. The private sector predominates in the permanent job category with 51,604 jobs (compared with 57,244 in 1997), followed by the public-service sector, which created 40,736 jobs (compared with 23,219), the youth investment sector (ANSEJ) with 37,999 jobs, public-sector economic entities with 34,548 jobs (compared with 23,219) and the privatization for employees scheme with 31,419 jobs. In addition, 6,972 jobs were created in the context of farming concessions, 4,898 through pre-employment contracts and 1,342 under programmes funded by external credit lines.

70. With regard to jobs classified as "equivalent to permanent posts", 125,715 of the 232,316 jobs created came under the heading of "general interest activities" (compared with 125,337 in 1997), followed by 72,212 jobs under the "local initiative employees" scheme (compared with 86,157) and 34,389 jobs in the "Tup Himo" highly labour-intensive public-utility branch (compared with 7,125 in 1997).

71. The schemes currently being developed are designed to alleviate the pressure and social cost of structural adjustment and to manage the social impact of the recession. They will gradually be reinforced by other schemes that are currently being tested, such as the concession system, or that are in the process of development, such as major public works and the exploitation of agricultural land.

72. Home work is gainful activity that is not based on a traditional employment contract. Although it is not covered by the statistics, it has become increasingly common, with many women, in particular, working from home. Another type of home work has been regulated since 1998. This kind of employment has enabled many women to become economically active and enjoy the associated social-welfare allowances and benefits. Part-time work is regulated and remunerated and offers the same social-welfare benefits as full-time employment.

73. The vocational training sector is comparatively well developed so that it can meet existing needs in quantitative terms and contribute to the development of human resources. No fewer than 400,000 students are currently enrolled in training courses and girls account for 50.3 per cent of this total.

74. The right to own property and to work there is recognized by the Constitution, article 52 of which states that "[p]rivate property is guaranteed". Article 66 states that "[e]very citizen has the duty [...] to respect the property of others". This provision is also applicable to foreigners who are legally resident in Algeria. According to article 67, "[a] foreigner who is lawfully present on the national territory shall enjoy the protection of the law for [...] his property".

75. Article 20 of the Constitution safeguards the rights of citizens and foreigners: "Nobody may be expropriated save in accordance with the law and subject to prior fair and equitable compensation". Anyone who fails to respect the property of others is liable to the penalties laid down in the Penal Code, particularly in articles 395, 397, 398 and 450, paragraph 4.

Article 7

Right to just and favourable working conditions

76. As indicated in the information given in relation to article 3 concerning the equal rights of men and women, this principle is carefully respected in the employment relations sphere. According to the provisions of article 25 of the relevant Algerian legislation, namely, the Individual Employment Relations Act (No. 92-06) of 27 February 1992, all restrictions on rights or advantages on grounds of sex are prohibited. This also applies to recruitment, to wages and other benefits and to promotion. Article 15 of the Act stipulates that "women enjoy specific rights regarding general working conditions and the prevention of occupational hazards". Article 16 prohibits women from carrying out dangerous, insalubrious or harmful tasks.

77. Specific measures designed to protect women, particularly in view of maternity and the woman's role in the family unit, include the following: a ban on night work; a ban on work on legal rest days; a ban on dangerous, insalubrious or harmful work; the suspension of the employment relationship for pre-natal or post-natal maternity leave; an entitlement to breastfeeding time (two hours per day for the first six months and one hour per day for the

following six months); and an entitlement to a full salary during maternity leave. All employers are required to draw up a collective agreement and a set of company rules, which are assessed by the Labour Inspectorate to ensure their consistency with the law. Collective agreements are negotiated between workers' representatives and the employing agency.

78. To date, no labour disputes have been brought before the Algerian courts concerning the failure of a public or private employer to fulfil its obligations, for instance, by paying a salary lower than the guaranteed minimum wage or by discrimination with regard to wages or the benefits derived from an employment relationship.

79. With regard to the promotion of female employment, there has been an increase in the number of day nurseries. This sector was opened up to allow privately operated or association-run establishments in 1992. Home care has been authorized and regulated in a similar fashion.

Article 8

Freedom of association and right to form or join trade unions

80. Freedom of association is an important aspect of life in Algeria. After political parties, voluntary associations are among the most dynamic and pervasive elements of social, cultural and scientific life. The accelerated registration procedures introduced by Act No. 90-31 of 4 December 1990 on the facilitation of the creation of associations have led to a marked increase in the number of associations. By way of comparison, over the 12-year period from 1976 to 1988, only 98 national associations were registered, whereas 678 were created in just six years between 1989 and 1996. Over those two periods, 776 national associations were established and 45,000 associations set up at the local level.

81. Associations can be divided into several categories:

Professional	196
Sports	78
Culture and education	76
Health and medicine	62
Science and technology	46
Youth	39
Mutual insurance	31
Alumni	21
Friendship, exchange and cooperation	21
Solidarity, aid and charity	16
Disabled and maladjusted persons	15
Women	15
Historical associations	14
Tourism and leisure	14
Foreign associations	13
Environment	12
Children and adolescents	10
Retired and elderly persons	18
Human rights	5

82. Grouping associations together on a broader basis helps detect the following motivating factors which lie behind the establishment of associations:

(i) Professional motivation for 256 associations;

(ii) Cultural motivation for 168 associations;

(iii) Scientific motivation for 408 associations;

(iv) Motivation linked to children and youth for 46 associations;

(v) Altruistic motivation for 31 associations (solidarity, aid, charity, disabled and maladjusted persons),

(vi) Motivation based on friendship, exchange and cooperation for 21 associations.

While quantitative aspects can provide us with information about the nature and orientation of voluntary associations, qualitative aspects, such as the nature of the niche filled, are also important. Even in small numbers, some associations are highly influential, such as those linked to historic points of reference, the environment, consumer protection, and so on.

83. The freedom to form or to join trade unions has not only been reaffirmed in the Constitution, but has been given organizational expression in Act No. 90-14 of 2 June 1990, as amended and supplemented by Act No. 91-30 of 21 December 1991 and Ordinance No. 96-12 of 6 June 1996. The Act recognizes the right of wage earners in the private and public sectors to form independent trade union organizations separate from political parties.

84. There are currently no fewer than 58 wage earners' organizations at the national level and 19 employers' organizations, of which 2 are in the public sector and 17 in the private sector. Among the trade unions, those in the public sector are most prominent at present:

(i) Health: 9 trade unions;

(ii) Social affairs: 9 trade unions;

(iii) Transport: 7 trade unions;

(iv) Education: 6 trade unions;

(v) Training: 6 trade unions.

There is also a large number of independent trade unions which do not operate at the national level.

85. The right to strike is provided for in the Constitution and codified by a law adopted by the Assembly. The number of collective disputes, arbitrations and industrial disputes recorded

each year since December 1991 is evidence of the vitality of mechanisms for the promotion of the material and moral rights of the various categories of occupations and of some categories of workers. In that context, should collective bargaining fail, there is a legal right to strike that is constitutionally protected when exercised within the law. The exercise of this right is common practice and is applicable in all areas of activity, including the public service and State structures.

86. The number of strikes has been on the decline since 1991: 2,290 in 1989, 2,023 in 1990, 1,034 in 1991, 493 in 1992, 537 in 1993, 410 in 1994, 432 in 1995, 441 in 1996, 292 in 1997 and 195 in 1998. This trend has been accompanied by a decline in the number of strikers, (on average, 54.78 per cent of the workforce of the sectors affected in 1995), in the number of sectors affected and in the resulting losses. This has also led to an increase in the scope for dialogue and for the adoption of joint decisions by the different social partners. The periodic meetings bringing together the three social partners (Government, employers and trade unions) are an illustration of the prevalence of a policy of dialogue.

Article 9

Right to social security and insurance

87. The existing social security system recognizes the rights of all workers to sickness insurance, to protection against accidents at work and to retirement. It also provides for persons unable to work due to disability to be looked after by the State.

88. In addition to these rights, working women are entitled to 14 weeks maternity leave, during which they receive their full salary in cash benefits. Furthermore, they are entitled to benefits to cover the full cost of medical and pharmaceutical expenses and hospital fees connected with childbirth. Non-working women whose husbands are social security contributors also receive maternity insurance benefits. Single mothers benefit from State protection and are admitted into hospital at no cost, with respect for their anonymity. Their social status cannot be used to prevent them from seeking employment and they are entitled to receive the same family allowances as any other worker.

89. Whereas the legal retirement age is 60 for male workers, women are entitled to take retirement at the age of 55, with a possible reduction of one year per child, subject to a maximum of three. The widows of social security contributors are entitled to survivors' benefits, whatever their age. The daughters of deceased contributors, if unmarried and without a source of income, are also entitled to survivors' benefits, whatever their age. These provisions take into account the specificity of Algerian society and guarantee an income to non-wage-earning women.

90. With regard to State benefits paid to families, wage earners are entitled to regularly reassessed allowances for their minor offspring. A special allowance is also available to families relying on a single wage.

Article 10

Protection of families and children

91. Article 58 of the Constitution stipulates that "families are entitled to protection from the State and from society". Article 59, concerning disabled persons, states that "citizens who are under working age or who can no longer or will never be able to work are guaranteed satisfactory living conditions".

92. In the chapter of the Constitution on citizens' rights, there are a number of provisions relating to the family and society, including:

(a) Article 63: "All individual freedoms shall be exercised with respect for the rights of others, as stipulated by the Constitution, in particular, the right to honour, privacy and the protection of the family, young people and children";

(b) Article 65: "The law recognizes the duty of parents to educate and protect their children, as well as the duty of children to help and assist their parents".

93. With regard to the protection of the family, in addition to its usual social security responsibilities outlined in relation to article 11, the State has been particularly active in its help for families affected by terrorism.

94. The legal framework for the compensation of victims of terrorism consists of a number of laws, including provisions of the Finance Act, an Executive Decree and implementing legislation. The system for national solidarity and the protection of the family provides compensation for the beneficiaries of deceased victims, bodily harm, material damage and victims of accidents arising from attempts to combat terrorism.

95. The system takes account of the marital, social and professional status of victims. Compensation is provided either on a monthly basis or in one payment and is calculated according to the victim's monthly income and, if need be, on the basis of parameters such as the victim's professional qualifications.

96. Compensation for bodily harm is determined by the victim's income and the level of impairment. Material damage is fully reimbursable. To date, the State has paid out around 5.5 billion dinars under this system.

97. To provide for medical care, an urgent scheme has been introduced by the Ministry of Health and Population which allows for the purchase of food, medicine and equipment. Over the past four years, 1,002,500,000 dinars have been allotted to this scheme.

98. The Ministry of Health and Population has issued instructions that women raped in connection with acts of terrorism should be allowed to have abortions. All medical care, psychological treatment and pharmaceutical products for rape victims are provided free of charge.

99. In many cases, for instance, to help families who have been the victims of terrorism, financial assistance is provided before the outcome of a compensation claim is known. The State has made around 20 billion centimes available for payments of this kind. In addition, a compensation fund for victims of terrorism has been established and receives 20 per cent of its finances (124 million dinars in 1996 and 151 million dinars in 1997) from the Special National Solidarity Fund.

100. Financial assistance is also given to associations involved in supporting families suffering as a result of terrorism. The National Association of Victims of Terrorism received a total of 10 million dinars in 1998.

101. The State contributes to the construction of new dwellings and facilitates access to low-income housing, including progressive housing. In 20 wilayates (prefectures), 530 houses have been provided for families affected by terrorism.

102. With a view to helping young people from these families in the employment sphere, a number of joint initiatives with the National Association of Victims of Terrorism have been taken in order to create micro-enterprises.

103. A convention has been signed which gives the National Distance Vocational Training Centre the responsibility of providing distance training for 400 disabled victims of terrorist acts. A total of 2.8 million dinars has been provided by the National Solidarity Fund for this purpose.

104. The psychological recovery of survivors and of children, in particular, is also provided for in this framework. To this end, the Government has opened counselling centres in places where civilian massacres have occurred. It has encouraged voluntary associations to develop initiatives in such places to help children and, in this context, has arranged for children, mothers and persons without families to be taken care of in the appropriate facilities. Holiday camps for child-victims of terrorism are also organized in collaboration with the relevant associations.

Article 11

Right to housing and to an adequate standard of living

105. The population of Algeria increased from 10 million at the time of independence in 1962 to 12 million when the last general census was carried out in 1966. It doubled between 1966 and 1987, reaching an estimated total of just over 22.8 million by the latter date. Currently, there are some 29.3 million inhabitants.

106. From a rate of 3.3 per cent during the 1960s, demographic growth first stabilized at a rate of 3.1 per cent, before beginning to drop in the second part of the 1980s, at which point it was recorded at 2.7 per cent. In 1997, it stood at 1.7 per cent.

107. The high rates of population growth recorded during the first three decades of independence have led to a relatively large proportion of people under the age of 30. Having completed its education and training, this section of the population is now seeking employment and housing.

108. The housing issue has always been a matter of concern to the authorities. The overall trend of investment in this sector has been matched by demographic growth. Whereas the number of persons per dwelling used to average 7.5, it is currently estimated at 7.4 at the national level, (7.6 in rural areas and 7.1 in urban areas). This number, which has remained unchanged for the past 10 years, is still too high. Demographic growth and productivity growth in the housing sector have remained at the same level, despite ambitious public programmes and the development of the private housing sector, which have not brought about much of a reduction in the housing shortage.

109. There has nevertheless been an improvement in the availability of conveniences in the housing sector. The percentage of dwellings connected to the following networks is as follows:

(i) Electricity: 93.4 per cent, compared to 72.7 per cent in 1987;

(ii) Drinking water: 76.8 per cent, compared to 58 per cent in 1987;

(iii) Sanitation: 96.1 per cent, compared to 63 per cent in 1987, and

(iv) Natural gas distribution: 54 per cent.

110. In 1998, 110 billion dinars were made available in the budget for housing construction. By the end of September 1998, 225,000 dwellings had been built and another 393,000 are currently under construction. On the basis of existing plans, Algeria will have 750,000 new dwellings by the end of the year 2000, not counting those being built in the private sector. The Government will continue to pursue such efforts in the future in order to meet demand, to improve the quality of life and the daily environment of Algerians and to replenish the existing housing stock.

111. The issue of standards of living has been considered under the article on State welfare benefits.

112. State spending on social issues, which represents an average of approximately 22 per cent of total expenditure, consists of:

(a) Direct financial assistance, including support for education and training (scholarships, university activities), measures to help the most underprivileged population sectors (social safety net, youth employment), as well as family benefits, pensions and retirement benefits;

(b) Indirect financial assistance , including price support measures, as well as subsidies to the health sector and social welfare institutions;

(c) Social security benefits and financial support for business-based or community-based social welfare work.

113. The special system established in 1992 to help the most vulnerable sectors of society consists of: the social safety net; social welfare; admission to specialized institutions; and access to health care and transport.

1. The social safety net

114. The social safety net consists of two State benefits providing direct income support to persons and families in need. They are the standard solidarity allowance and the community service benefit.

(a) Standard solidarity allowance

115. This allowance is granted to elderly or disabled persons who are incapable of working and who are heads of household or live alone. Expenditure on the allowance is high and amounted to 4.536 billion dinars, the equivalent of US$ 75.6 million, in 1997. More than 420,000 people, including 195,734 women, benefited from it in 1998.

(b) Community service benefit

116. The community service benefit is given to non-wage-earning persons and heads of household in return for their participation in public works organized by local communities for eight hours per day, 22 days per month. The budget for these activities amounts to 12 billion dinars, the equivalent of US$ 200 million, and 38.8 per cent of the beneficiaries are women. This benefit not only constitutes a form of income support for the most underprivileged population sectors, but also helps improve their living conditions and environment, for many such people live in isolated areas, in deprived and precarious conditions.

2. Social welfare

117. The State provides financial help for disadvantaged persons through its social welfare system. While the system is non-discriminatory, it helps women and young girls in particular. It is aimed at needy children as well as disabled and elderly persons. Social welfare expenditure amounted to 1.734 billion dinars, the equivalent of US$ 28.9 million, in 1997.

3. Access to health care

118. Access to health care is aimed primarily at disabled persons and beneficiaries of the social safety net affiliated to the social security system. The payment of benefits is entirely the State's responsibility. As such:

(a) The Social Insurance Act (No. 83-11) establishes the principle that social security is to be made available to all disabled persons incapable of working. The disabled are thus insured under the social security system and receive the relevant benefits. The allowance for each disabled person is 5 per cent of the national guaranteed minimum wage (SNMG). The budget for this scheme was estimated at 367.4 million dinars, the equivalent of US$ 6.12 million, in 1997.

(b) The Social Development Fund finances the social insurance allowance paid to beneficiaries of the social safety net, which amounts to 6 per cent of the national guaranteed minimum wage and comes to 2.15 billion dinars, or the equivalent of US$ 35.83 million.

(c) Non-contributors to social insurance who are both deprived and chronically ill benefit from the free provision of essential medicines. Thus, 73 medicines for the treatment of eight pathological conditions (cancer, asthma, psychiatric disorders, endometriosis, metabolic disorders, diabetes, etc.) are available without charge under this scheme. The total amount spent comes to US$ 417,000.

(d) With regard to public transport, non-wage-earning disabled persons benefit from reductions and/or free travel on urban and inter-city rail and road transport.

Article 12

Right to health

1. General

119. The right to health protection is a constitutional right (Constitution, art. 54). Access to health services is guaranteed to everyone without discrimination; coverage is almost universal, reaching an estimated 98 per cent of the population. Access has been boosted by improvements in health coverage, as illustrated by the following ratios:

1 doctor per 1,262 inhabitants;

1 primary health care unit per 5,000 inhabitants;

2.03 beds per 1,000 inhabitants;

1.5 maternity/gynaecology bed per 1,000 women of childbearing age.

120. The Algerian Government has also expanded primary health care infrastructures and promoted medical and paramedical training. Algeria now has an extensive medical infrastructure:

13 university hospital centres;

19 specialist hospitals;

184 hospitals;

56 clinics;

455 polyclinics (186 of which have maternity beds);

1,123 health centres;

3,876 sick bays.

121. As regards staffing, in 1997, there were 10,640 general practitioners in the public sector, 5,499 of them women; 3,488 specialists, 1,735 of them women; and 5,467 university hospital doctors, 2,418 of them women. In the private sector, there were 8,195 doctors, 4,100 of whom were women. Total staff therefore amount to 27,790 doctors, including 13,752 women. WHO considers Algeria's medical coverage of one doctor per 1,123 inhabitants (1997) to be good for a developing country.

122. The State health budget is, like the education budget, one of the largest. The health operating budget, for example, is in the order of US$ 660 million and accounts for 7 per cent of the State's overall operating budget.

2. Demographic policy

123. The demographic situation changed rapidly in the 20 years following independence. The population growth rate was more than 3 per cent per year during the 1960s and 1970s and up to 1985. The sustained high population growth rate during this period resulted in a doubling of the population - i.e. an increase of 10 million - in the 22 years from 1962 to 1985. The problems arising from population growth prompted the adoption and implementation of an affirmative population policy in 1983.

124. Population growth began to slow perceptibly in the late 1980s. The population growth rate, an estimated 2.7 per cent in 1987, declined to 2.4 per cent in 1990 and stood at 1.7 per cent in 1997. At this rate, the doubling period of the population is around 42 years, i.e. twice what it was during the 1960s and 1970s. This demographic change is essentially due to the drop in the birth rate, which fell from 50 per thousand in 1970 to 39 per thousand in 1985, 30 per thousand in 1990 and 22.9 per thousand in 1996. Other factors in the declining population growth rate are a higher age of marriage and the increasing use of contraception.

125. The higher age of marriage, which applies to both urban and rural areas, is a further indicator of social development. The average age of marriage in rural communities rose from 19.8 to 24.6 between 1977 and 1992. As a result, the number of early pregnancies has declined; in 1996, only 19 women per thousand had a child before the age of 20, as compared with 60 per thousand in 1980. The drop in the birth rate has led to a concomitant reduction in fertility. The fertility rate declined from 7 children per woman in 1990 to 3.68 in 1994 and 3.14 in 1997. The rate needed for generation replacement is around 2.1 children per woman and Algeria is expected to reach that rate by around 2010.

126. The population programmes that have been implemented aim to improve the accessibility of reproductive health care, concentrating particularly on less advantaged areas, through information, education and communication directed at various population groups (young people, men, rural communities, etc.); by linking population policy to other social policies (land management, environment, advancement of women, etc.); and through research into various population-related fields.

127. Health policy, which drives demographic policy, is devised in conjunction with other ministries and intersectoral cooperation is one of the guiding principles underlying national health and population policy. It is enshrined in the charter adopted by the 1998 National Conference on Health, which defines health objectives, principles and strategies up to the year 2005. It is implemented through coordination mechanisms at the national and local levels.

128. In the population field, for example, the National Population Committee was established in 1996. The Committee includes representatives of 30 ministerial departments, national institutions and community associations and helps define, coordinate, implement, follow up and evaluate national population policy, including its reproductive health and family planning component.

129. The involvement of community groups in such bodies is a great advantage, for it allows civil society's needs to be better reflected in the preparation and implementation of health and population policies. Since 1998, moreover, community associations (consumer groups, patient groups, etc.) have been included as active members of hospital boards.

130. Intersectoral cooperation also works at the regional level. The 1990s have been a time of decentralization in health programmes. During that period, five health areas have gradually been created. The aim of regionalization is to adapt health programmes to local conditions. To coordinate health programmes at the regional level, regional health boards, composed of representatives of various sectors (education, environment, welfare, employment and social services) have been created to act as intermediaries and arbitrators in the preparation and implementation of health programmes.

3. Access to health care

131. According to the section entitled "Access to health care" of the National Statistical Office survey on living standards which was carried out in late 1995, the majority of those who sought medical advice when ill were women, in both urban and rural areas, as shown in the table below. There was a slight variation, however, depending on area of residence.

Proportion of the population who seek medical advice when ill

(percentage)

	Men	Women (per cent)	Total
Urban	81.1	85.7	83.1
Rural	72.4	73.5	72.9
Total	76.4	79.1	77,9

(a) Family planning and contraception

132. Family planning, which is the cornerstone of population programmes, forms part of the overall reproductive health care system, including safe motherhood, the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and the treatment of infertility and genital cancers. Family planning

is based on the principle of voluntary participation and freedom of choice. Compulsion with regard to the decision to have children has no place whatsoever in the national programme. It is not a matter of regulating family size, but of providing information and raising couples' awareness of what responsible parenthood means in order to improve the family's health and encourage its harmonious development. Voluntary participation by couples is essential to consistent behaviour in family planning. Free choice in family planning is also one of the conceptual elements of the plans of action adopted in Cairo and Beijing.

133. Contraceptive use went from 35.5 per cent of the population in the mid-1980s to 56.9 per cent in 1995. This increase involved in particular the use of modern contraceptive methods. The prevalence rate of such modern methods rose from 1.5 per cent in 1970 to 31 per cent in 1986 and 49 per cent in 1995, while the prevalence rate of natural or traditional methods remained virtually unchanged, varying between 6.5 per cent, 4.5 per cent and 7.5 per cent during the same period.

134. The most widely used method of contraception in Algeria is the pill, with an estimated prevalence rate of 43.4 per cent (out of 56.9 per cent) in 1995, or three out of four users. In second place is the intra-uterine device (IUD), with a rate of 4.1 per cent. The use of other modern methods (condoms, injectables) is less widespread, with a rate of around 1.5 per cent. Prolonged breastfeeding remains the most widely used of the natural methods. The range of approved contraceptive products in Algeria was extended in 1997 on the occasion of the revision of the national nomenclature of medicaments and pharmaceutical products, when injectable contraceptives and hormone implants were introduced. In all, 29 contraceptive products are listed and approved in the national nomenclature.

135. With regard to continuity of contraception, the average period of use of contraceptive methods has lengthened considerably in the last 10 years, increasing from 25.2 months in 1996 to 31.5 months in 1995. The average period of use for the pill is 31.5 months and for the IUD 37.3 months. Current programmes favour the use of long-term methods and, in particular the IUD. IUD use is promoted in training for staff, doctors and midwives through information and awareness-raising campaigns and through the involvement of private practitioners, particularly gynaecologists, in a project linking the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Welfare and the Family and the National Social Insurance Fund.

136. Men are strongly encouraged to participate, in two ways. Male contraception in the form of condom usage is becoming more widespread, particularly as a way of combating STD/AIDS. Information, education and awareness-raising campaigns are conducted targeting men specifically, particularly in the workplace. In addition, a project run by agricultural extension workers with the support of UNFPA is currently under way, aiming to raise awareness among men in rural areas.

137. Pregnancy monitoring and especially postnatal monitoring are an integral part of basic mother and child health care. Postnatal care includes not only clinical and gynaecological examinations, but also health education and the prescription of contraception. These services are provided in maternity clinics and other primary health care institutions (polyclinics and health centres) and are completely free of charge. However, in practice, postnatal consultation attracts fewer women than prenatal care, in both urban and rural areas.

138. With regard to access to family planning, tangible progress has been made since the inclusion of this component in primary health care in the late 1960s. Further progress was made in the 1990s, when the national population policy was implemented. Contraception awareness is thus almost universal (in 1995, 99 per cent of women knew of at least one modern method); and contraceptive use has increased steadily, as shown in the table below.

Prevalence rate of contraception

(percentage of married women of childbearing age)

Year	1970	1984	1986	1990	1992	1995
Prevalence rate of contraception (per cent)	8	25	35.5	40.6	50.6	56.9

The use of modern methods of contraception has also become more widespread and the rate rose from 43 per cent to 49 per cent between 1992 and 1995.

139. Lastly, the spread of contraception applies both in urban and in rural areas, and the gap between the two areas has shrunk, as shown in the table below.

Prevalence rate of contraception by area of residence

(percentage of married women of childbearing age)

	1970	1986	1992	1995
Urban	17.5	38.6	57.5	57.2
Rural	4.0	29.6	44.1	56.6

140. The legal basis for family planning is the Protection and Promotion of Health Act (No. 85-05) of 16 February 1989, as amended and supplemented. In particular, the Act establishes a framework for mother and child health protection, providing a full range of medical, social and administrative measures whose purpose is to protect mothers' health by offering the best medical and social conditions before, during and after pregnancy and to strive to create the best conditions for children's mental and physical development. The Act mentions birth spacing as a means of "ensuring harmony and balance and protecting mothers' and children's life and health" and also sets forth the conditions for therapeutic abortion as "an essential measure to protect women whose lives are in danger or to safeguard their psychological stability". The 1990 amendments, legalized inter alia, the prescription of family planning methods by midwives, who now represent nearly three quarters of family planning service providers.

141. The expansion of access to reproductive and family planning services is a cornerstone of Algeria's health and population policy. The goal set in the programme adopted by the Government Council in March 1997 is a usage rate of 60 per cent for modern contraceptive

methods by the end of the decade. In order to facilitate access to family planning, contraceptive services and products are free of charge in public health institutions. When provided through the private sector, 100 per cent of the cost of family planning services and products is reimbursed by social security.

142. The programme of action adopted has three main objectives:

(a) To expand the network of health infrastructures offering family planning services and to improve the quality of those services: at present, 1,960 units across the country (health departments and sectors) include family planning in basic mother and child health care. In 1995, referral centres were set up in 360 maternity clinics in all departments in order to strengthen the links between maternity and contraception, in particular by systematizing post-delivery family planning;

(b) To enhance the quality of services by providing in-service training to reproductive health/family planning professionals (doctors and midwives); improving equipment in units; widening the range of contraceptive methods, in particular through the introduction in 1997 of injectable contraceptives; and updating intervention protocols so as to promote the use of IUDs, the development of post-delivery contraception, the introduction of injectables and the improvement of the information and evaluation system;

(c) To develop information, education and communication (IEC) campaigns. IEC campaigns on the issues of population in general and family planning in particular were stepped up in 1996 and 1997 in order to boost participation in family planning. A programme involving various sectors (communications, national education, religious affairs, youth, etc.) and community organizations has been implemented.

The activities involve transmitting information both through the media and face to face in various forums (schools, mosques, health centres, youth clubs, etc.).

143. The creation and start-up of a National Reproductive Health/Family Planning Committee composed of medical and paramedical practitioners and representatives of civil society has provided a forum for coordination that will make it possible to develop strategies and actions for the improvement of reproductive health care and expand participation in family planning; in particular the Committee has contributed to the revision of protocols on contraceptive intervention.

144. The preparation, follow-up and evaluation of these programmes form part of the work of the National Population Committee, a multisectoral body created in 1996 within the Ministry of Health and Population; this Committee is responsible for coordinating and running population-related activities and, in particular, for following up the implementation of the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development.

145. Health care for pregnant women and the improvement of delivery conditions form an integral part of basic health programmes. Extending maternity health care coverage has made it possible to expand prenatal monitoring and to increase the number of assisted deliveries. As a

result, prenatal monitoring, which was available to 30 per cent of pregnant women in the early 1980s, covered 57.3 per cent in 1992. A case study carried out in 1997 in three areas (urban, semi-urban and rural) showed that only 11 per cent of women were not monitored at all during pregnancy, but that monitoring in around 34 per cent of cases was still inadequate (from 1 to 3 consultations).

146. As to progress made, there are still differences between urban and rural areas. In terms of prenatal monitoring, 96 per cent of women in major cities are monitored during pregnancy, as against 75 per cent in semi-urban areas and 46 per cent in rural areas. Similarly, in 1992, one in three deliveries in rural areas were home deliveries.

147. Maternal mortality remains a matter of public health concern: hospital statistics show an estimated maternal mortality rate of 67 per thousand in 1996. In 1994, efforts to combat maternal and perinatal morbidity and mortality were intensified through a national programme whose principal objectives were:

(a) The development of prenatal monitoring and anti-tetanus vaccination for pregnant women. Significantly, while, in 1992, an estimated 21 per cent of pregnant women were vaccinated against tetanus, by 1996, the figure was more than 50 per cent;

(b) Prenatal monitoring, which also involves dealing with anaemic deficiency by providing iron supplements. In 1980, 40 per cent of pregnant women suffered from anaemia, as compared with 17 per cent in 1996;

(c) An increase in the percentage of assisted deliveries;

(d) Systematic care for newborns and neonatal reanimation;

(e) Post-natal monitoring and family planning.

This programme relies particularly on communication through the major media, in-service training for staff and performance enhancement in health institutions .

148. Primary health programmes have been regionalized as a means of redirecting efforts towards disadvantaged areas. In 1995, health areas were established, including regional health observatories with a reproductive health/family planning component, and this has helped in implementing action programmes geared towards local conditions. Care relating to pregnancy monitoring is free of charge; a small fee is requested for the delivery in order to cover hospital charges.

149. With regard to abortion, the law authorizes only therapeutic abortion, prescribed and carried out by medical staff to safeguard the mother's health. According to the Protection and Promotion of Health Act (No. 85-05), article 72: "Abortion for therapeutic purposes is considered essential in order to protect a mother whose life is in danger or whose physiological or mental equilibrium is seriously threatened. Abortion shall be carried out by a doctor in a specialist institution, following a medical examination conducted jointly with a specialist".

150. As can be seen, the Act's provisions are broad and the concept of health includes both physiological and mental aspects. It leaves the decision on abortion to doctors, although the patient's consent is naturally required, as it is for all medical interventions, in accordance with the Code of Ethics. Nevertheless, the general practitioner's opinion must be supported by that of a specialist. In 1990, abortion accounted for 8.6 per cent of pregnancies, compared with 6.1 per cent in 1995. This reduction may indicate an improvement in maternity care.

(b) Infant mortality

151. The national programme of action against maternal and perinatal mortality thus gives high priority to the development of post-natal monitoring. Awareness campaigns targeted at women are conducted through the media and in health institutions. In addition, the system of inviting women to post-natal consultations has been reactivated and even involves home visits in some cases. In the area of family planning, in-service contraception training programmes have been organized for doctors and midwives, with the broad dissemination of the relevant intervention protocols.

152. Ad hoc surveys in university medical centres have found that haemorrhages, puerperal infections, the renal syndrome and dystocia are some of the commonest causes of maternal mortality. Top priority has been given to the aim of reducing deaths by haemorrhage, which account for about one quarter of maternal deaths, by the end of the decade. Action includes staff training, the availability of basic drugs and the systematic recording of the blood group of pregnant women.

153. As far as the causes of mortality are concerned, it should be noted that infant mortality has declined sharply since independence, from almost 200 per thousand live births in 1992 to 85 in 1980 and 54.5 in 1996. While the mortality rate for girls was higher than that for boys until the early 1980s, the trend has since been reversed and the infant mortality rate in 1996 was 53 per thousand live births for girls and 56 for boys.

154. The programme focused in the first stage on vaccination development. There has been a considerable decline in diseases which can be controlled by vaccination, and which were the main cause of infant mortality until the early 1980s. By 1995, 93 per cent of all children, without discrimination on the basis of sex, had been vaccinated. The proportion of girls vaccinated with BCG is 99 per cent (also 99 per cent for boys); the proportion vaccinated against DTP/polio is 94.7 per cent for girls and 94 per cent for boys; 75 per cent of girls are vaccinated against measles, compared with 75.5 per cent of boys.

155. At present, the most frequent causes of infant morbidity and mortality are acute respiratory infections and neonatal diarrhoeal diseases (0 to 1 month), which account for half of all deaths of children under one year of age. The national programme has been adjusted to take account of this change in the causes of infant mortality.

156. Priority has been given to action to combat acute respiratory infections, diarrhoeal diseases and perinatal mortality. Deaths from diarrhoea declined from 1,500 in 1995 to 650 in 1998; deaths related to acute respiratory infections dropped from 1,283 in 1995 to 650 in 1998. Vaccination campaigns against measles have been conducted regularly since 1995.

Year	-Infant mortality ratio (%)		
	Male	Female	Total
1990	60.00	55.5	57.80
1991	59.40	54.20	56.90
1992	57.70	53.00	55.40
1993	57.61	53.29	55.49
1994	56.80	51.51	54.21
1995	57.94	51.68	54.87
1996	56.88	52.21	54.59
1997	59.50	53.66	56.64

157. Older women also enjoy health coverage. Mention should be made in this connection of demographic trends, which point to the gradual, but inevitable, ageing of the population. This concern is now reflected in the country's health policy. Health coverage for menopausal women is provided for under reproductive health care (coverage of osteoporosis, genital cancers, etc.). The year 1999, proclaimed International Year of Older Persons, provided a further opportunity to improve the country's provision for various aspects of ageing (social and health aspects, etc.). An intersectoral national plan was drawn up for the purpose.

(c) Health studies

158. Since the 1990s, considerable attention has been given to research on women's health. The following surveys may be mentioned by way of illustration:

(a) The Algerian survey of maternal and child health conducted in 1992 under the Pan Arab Project for Child Development (PAPCHILD) financed, inter alia, by the League of Arab States, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA);

(b) The survey on mid-decade maternal and child health objectives, supported by UNICEF and UNFPA (1995);

(c) The survey on living conditions (1995) incorporating a module on women's access to health care;

(d) The survey on maternal mortality launched in January 1999 and based on a system of data gathering on maternal deaths (covering the period from 2 January to 31 December 1999) involving close collaboration between the civil status services and health institutions (and, if necessary, a family survey); this survey covers every district in the country;

(e) At the end of the current year, the last of these surveys will provide a comprehensive picture of the maternal mortality situation, which will be used to draw up a plan of action tailored to the needs of each region.

Lastly, mention should be made of a number of surveys and practical research projects on reproductive health carried out by university teaching hospitals, including a study on the acceptability of injectables and one on the causes of resistance to IUDs.

159. With regard to drug addiction in the female population, this phenomenon, especially among the young, was evaluated by two surveys conducted in 1990 and 1997. The findings of the surveys are consistent and indicate that drug use is still a marginal problem among young women. At all events, the fight against drug addiction forms an integral part of the national health policy. In this connection, a multisectoral programme based on prevention, medical, psychological and social care for addicts and the training of human resources has been implemented.

160. Moral and ethical principles have been incorporated in basic training courses for doctors and midwives and in in-service training courses in reproductive health. They are a key component of the national health policy. A National Board of Health Science Ethics was established in 1990 and a Board of Professional Ethics in 1998.

Article 13

Right to education

1. General data

161. The right of access to education is recognized in article 53 of the Constitution and in Order No. 76-35 of 16 April on the organization of education and training, articles 4 to 7 of which deal with equal access to education, compulsory education and free education. A major concern of the public authorities is to provide nine years of compulsory basic schooling for every young Algerian. This type of education, provided in basic education establishments and governed by the Order of 16 April 1976, "offers the same opportunities from the outset to all boys and girls who have reached the age of six". Education has always been compulsory in Algeria.

2. School map

162. A total of 7,435,858 pupils are currently enrolled in Algerian schools, of whom 3,521,237 are girls. The breakdown is as follows:

(a) A total of 6,556,768 pupils enrolled in basic education, of whom 3,048,935 are girls;

(b) A total of 879,090 students enrolled in secondary education, of whom 472,302 are girls.

163. With regard to teaching staff, the total number of teachers at all levels of education stands at 323,710, including 148,404 women; there are 1,998 inspectors, including 88 women, again at all levels; the figure for administrative staff is 46,112, including 12,888 women, at all levels of the system.

164. The number of women in the teaching profession has shown a considerable increase. In primary education, there were 170,460 teachers, including 77,756 women, in 1997-1998, compared with 19,908 and 2,996, respectively, in 1962-1963.

165. In intermediate education, the numbers increased to 99,907 teachers, including 48,347 women, in 1997-1998, compared with 2,488 teachers, including 1,836 women, in 1962-1963. In secondary education, the figures for 1997-1998 are 53,543 teachers, including 22,310 women; in 1962-1963, there were 1,216 teachers, including 684 women.

166. There are also 29 establishments for the training of teacher educators.

167. As an indicator of current trends, it may be noted that the enrolment ratio for six-year-old girls rose from 36.60 per cent in 1967-1968, five years after independence, to 90.36 per cent in 1997-1998. In basic (primary and intermediate) education, the ratio for girls rose from 36.58 per cent in 1967-1968 to 46.50 per cent in 1997-1998 and, in secondary education, from 25.65 per cent in 1967-1968 to 53.73 per cent in 1997-1998.

3. Measures to promote the right to education

168. To boost this trend, the Government has adopted a General Educational Policy bill, which will be submitted to the present session of Parliament for approval. Under article 7, the bill imposes penalties on any parent or guardian who impedes the access to education of children aged between 6 and 16. This measure affects girls far more than boys.

169. Action to enforce the above-mentioned provisions and to reduce the drop-out rate focuses on school distribution, school canteens, boarding schools, educational solidarity and school transport facilities.

170. In the area of school distribution, a considerable effort has been made to build basic educational facilities, especially in rural areas, in order to reduce the distance between school and family to the minimum. In the 1997-1998 school year, there were 15,507 schools, of which 6,518 were located in urban areas, 2,557 in semi-rural areas and 6,432 in rural areas. By comparison, in the early 1960s, the total number of primary schools was 4,900. At the intermediate or lower secondary level, there were 3,224 establishments, of which 1,889 were in urban areas, 658 in semi-rural areas and 667 in rural areas. In 1960, the total number of such establishments was 380. At the upper secondary level, there were 1,183 establishments, including 898 in urban areas, 198 in semi-rural areas and 87 in rural areas. In 1960, there were only 39 upper-level secondary schools.

171. In 1997-1998, there were 4,142 school canteens for 561,311 users. It should be noted that the building of schools in very remote areas has brought schools closer to the population.

172. There are 27 primary-level boarding schools catering for 3,000 girls and boys in the 6 to 12 age group. At the intermediate level, there are 23,350 boarders and, at the secondary level, 53,048. These boarding schools are intended for children in the most remote areas, especially the children of nomads from the Saharan regions. They also cater for orphans who have not been placed in a family and whose welfare lies entirely in the hands of the public authorities.

173. Moreover, a decline in enrolment rates was observed two years ago, particularly for girls, because of an increase in boarding-school fees. The State immediately took steps to defray the costs so that they would not serve as a motive for dropping out of school.

174. With regard to the fourth measure, educational solidarity, in 1997-1998 an amount of 507,384,637 dinars was allocated to 1,545,589 beneficiary pupils. The scheme consisted in providing disadvantaged pupils with school supplies and textbooks, satchels, smocks and other items of clothing. Almost 1,548,000 pupils from 16 departments of the South and High Plateaux regions benefited from the scheme.

175. In addition, an appreciable number of localities, especially the most isolated, have benefited from school transport facilities. This project, initiated by the authorities, provides for the purchase of 700 buses for school transport and the extension of the scheme to cover all departments.

4. Higher education

176. The higher education network comprises 30 university towns with 13 universities, 10 university centres, 4 medical science institutes, 9 university-level schools with competitive entrance examinations and a large number of institutes attached to technical ministries.

177. The number of students has increased:

(a) At the undergraduate level, from 241,600 in 1994 to 286,000 in 1996, 339,500 in 1997 and almost 400,000 at the beginning of the 1998-1999 academic year;

(b) At the postgraduate level, from 14,500 in 1994, to 16,900 in 1996, 18,100 in 1997 and almost 20,000 at the beginning of the 1998-1999 academic year.

178. The following figures illustrate the proportion of women students in different fields of specialization:

(a) In physical sciences: 21,889 students enrolled, including 12,843 women, i.e. 58.67 per cent;

(b) In technology: 99,581 students enrolled, including 30,618 women, i.e. 30.75 per cent;

(c) In veterinary science: 4,531 students enrolled, including 1,830 women, i.e. 30.75 per cent;

(d) In natural and earth sciences: 28,702 students enrolled, including 17,260 women, i.e. 60.14 per cent.

179. In 1986-1987 there were 15,801 teachers, including 3,624 women. This represents a doubling of the proportion of women in the teaching corps in 10 years.

Article 15

Right to take part in cultural life and to benefit from scientific progress and the protection of copyright

180. The press, which had been monopolized by the authorities since independence, has enjoyed greater freedom under the Constitution of 23 February 1989, which emphasizes democratic openness. As the cornerstone of freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of the press has encouraged debate and the emergence of public opinion as a force to be reckoned with. The spectacular development of the press has placed it in the forefront of the campaign for civil liberties and of democratic achievement.

181. The number of publications has increased from 49 (all public) in 1988 to 79 (72 per cent of which are private). The private press now plays a predominant role on the media stage in terms of both the number of publications and the number of copies sold, with the private sector accounting for 87 per cent.

182. In terms of categories of publication, the private press controls 66 per cent of daily newspapers, accounting for 87 per cent of the readership, 84 per cent of weeklies, accounting for 83 per cent of the readership, and 86 per cent of periodicals, accounting for 52 per cent of the readership.

183. Mention should also be made of the existence of a 24-hour television channel covering the whole of the national territory, a satellite channel that broadcasts to the Algerian community abroad, 3 national radio stations, an international radio station, 16 local radio stations and 3 special-interest stations.

184. The publication of newspapers and periodicals is free and subject only to a prior declaration, 30 days before the publication of the first issue, the purpose of which is to register the publication and check its veracity. Publications should contain no material, even advertisements, likely to encourage violence or hatred. In such cases, it is recognized that "Registered human rights and child protection institutions, organizations or associations [may] sue for damages" (art. 27).

185. Articles 35 and 40 of the Information Code Act No. 90-07 of 3 April 1990 recognize journalists' "right of access to information sources" and their "right to refuse any editorial instruction from a source other than senior editorial staff", but require them to "ensure strict respect for the moral and ethical principles" of their profession, especially by "providing full and objective information, correcting any information that proves inaccurate and refraining from any advocacy of racism, intolerance and violence".

186. Since the declaration of the state of emergency, a seesaw relationship has developed between the media and the authorities and registered associations. The measures taken by the authorities to protect journalists are viewed either as inadequate or as draconian. It should be noted that over 60 journalists and media professionals have been killed by terrorist groups since 1992. These killings were described in October 1993 as the "execution of death sentences" by a leader of the dissolved Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) living in exile.

187. Furthermore, owing to lack of experience and competition among newspapers, many of them lapse into the kind of journalism that is punishable under article 40 of the Information Code. On the pretext of freedom of expression, some publications allow their columns to be used to disseminate statements or positions that are deemed to be defamatory or insulting to individuals, established bodies or symbols of the nation.

188. The right to information is exercised in complete freedom, also under the legislation on the state of emergency which temporarily limited its scope in matters relating to security information. On 7 March 1994, a regulatory instrument set up a communication unit for relations with the media in connection with information and the preparation and dissemination of press releases about the security situation and prohibited the dissemination of any information not contained in an official communiqué. These regulations, which were purely formal, are no longer applied.